

J A RANCH HEADQUARTERS, MAIN HOUSE
Paloduro
Armstrong County
Texas

HABS TX-3530-A
TX-3530-A

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

J A RANCH HEADQUARTERS, MAIN HOUSE

HABS No. TX 3530-A

The JA Ranch Headquarters consists of numerous buildings erected over an extended period of time and includes both historically and architecturally significant buildings as well as more recent auxiliary structures having little historical or architectural value. Exhibiting historical and architectural importance are the Main House, Post Office, Bunk House, and Corrals. This report focuses on the Main House. For more information on the other structures see:

HABS TX-3530 – J A Ranch Headquarters

HABS TX-3530-B – J A Ranch, Bunk House/Mess Hall

HABS TX-3530-C – J A Ranch, Post Office

HABS TX-3530-D – J A Ranch, Corrals

MAIN HOUSE

A. General Statement:

1. **Architectural Character:** The JA Main House comprises the original two-story log cabin built by Charles Goodnight and George Osborne beginning in October 1878, and numerous additions and alterations erected by unknown persons over the next thirty years. The original rectangular log cabins remains mostly as first constructed although with additions of a surrounding porch and larger living areas to accommodate the growing living and entertainment functions of the successful ranch. The original logs and chinking are obvious from the exterior and are also evident in parts of the interior. Subsequent alterations to the log cabin have added modern amenities such as central mechanical systems and bathroom facilities.

Subsequent additions resulted in a large two-story vernacular ranch house exhibiting the trend from the rudimentary housing provided by the log cabin to a more refined and opulent home common to western ranching heritage and made possible by the railroads' unremitting western progression, as well as by burgeoning ranch incomes. Consistent with the refinement of the exterior were interior improvements in furniture, floor and wall coverings, and artwork. Such appointments resulted both from purchases in the United States as well as those made by Cornelia Adair in Great Britain.

2. **Condition of Fabric:** The current condition of the JA Main House is excellent and fully functioning with permanent inhabitants. There are no apparent cosmetic, structural, electrical, or mechanical deficiencies.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The two-story dwelling is a rectangular plan with offsets. The overall dimensions, including porches, are approximately one-hundred feet, nine inches by fifty six feet, three inches.
2. Foundations: Foundations consist of concrete surrounding the partial basement with stone rubble forming the foundation of the balance of the main structure
3. Walls: The majority of the walls are load-bearing stone with wood logs surrounding the original log cabin.
4. Structural System, Framing: Stone and log load-bearing walls support a roof framing system of wood trusses and rafters. Wood flooring is supported on wood sub-structure.
5. Porches, Stoops: A porch extends along the east (front) façade and wraps part of the south end of the house. Another, separate porch wraps the east and south façades of the original log cabin. A separate porch extends along the west façade of the log cabin and kitchen, while a fourth covered area protects the exterior basement stairs at the northwest corner of the house.
6. Chimneys: Six chimneys service a like number of fireplaces. All chimneys and fireplaces are fully functional. All chimneys except the one servicing the den consist entirely of stone. The den chimney is of stone to its original height (pre-1919) when a plaster extension, to aid drawing capability, was added and resulted in the chimney's present height. All chimneys except the one servicing the exercise room have cement-wash caps. The exercise room chimney's cap is missing, as are some stones at its top.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and Doors: Four doorways provide access to the first floor of the house, one of which is a double doorway that serves as the main entrance on the east façade. A fifth exterior doorway serves the partial basement.
 - b. Windows and Shutters: Thirty-eight 1/1 single-hung wooden sash windows encircle the house, with twenty-one on the first floor and seventeen providing light and ventilation through second floor walls and dormers. No shutters exist.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, Covering: The majority of the roof is multi-gabled with a flat, built-up roof above the second floor hall and parts of three bedrooms. Roofing material is wood shake shingles on the gabled portions and gravel ballast on the flat section. Pent roofs supported by ornamental wrought iron posts cover the east and south porches, as well as over the porches on the east and south façades of the log cabin. Additional pent roofs over west porches are supported by square wood posts.

- b. Cornice, Eaves: Painted wood trim comprises the cornices with decorative wood brackets supporting the eaves and portions of the second floor.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

- a. Basement: A partial basement exists under the northwest part of the first floor, beneath the exercise room, hallway, and dining room. Overall dimensions of the partial basement are approximately forty-four feet four inches by twenty-eight feet, three inches. The partial basement currently houses storage in its four rooms. A concrete milk cooler trough is intact. Stone walls encompass the concrete-floor and plaster-ceiling basement.
 - b. First Floor: The first floor includes the original log cabin at the southwest corner of the house and its subsequent additions made over a period of thirty years. The original log cabin is used as a living room with a fireplace positioned off-center to the east in its south wall. The balance of the first floor has evolved through the additions to include another, larger living room accessed by the house's main entrance and located on the east side of the house. The first floor also includes a large kitchen, mud room, den, dining room, bedroom, exercise room, dressing room, and two baths, along with auxiliary storage rooms. A central hallway provides access to some first floor rooms and to a central stairway to the second floor. Additional fireplaces also service the large living room, bedroom, exercise room, den, and dining room.
 - c. Second Floor: The second floor houses seven bedrooms of various sizes and two baths. The main central stairway provides access to five bedrooms while a smaller stair located in the original log cabin supplies entry to the remaining two bedrooms. Storage rooms are located under the sloping roof at the perimeter of the second floor.
 - d. Attic: A large inaccessible (except for storage areas noted above) attic is unfinished with exposed wood rafters.
2. Stairways: There are two interior stairways; one in the original log cabin and a second, larger centrally located stairway. The central stairway is an elegant, two-flight, open well, open-string stair with treads, risers, and balustrade in excellent condition. It rises ten steps to a landing, turns one hundred and eighty-degrees and continues nine steps to the second floor hall. The stairway located in the original log cabin is a single-run stairway along a wall between the first floor log cabin living room and the kitchen and rises thirteen steps to a hall between two second floor bedrooms. A third exterior stair located at the northwest corner descends thirteen concrete steps providing access to the partial basement.

3. Flooring:

a. Partial Basement: Concrete

b. First Floor:

- 1.) Log Cabin: Carpet in the main room. Bath has sheet vinyl flooring. Shower is ceramic tile with wood steps leading to shower enclosure.
- 2.) Main House Additions: Flooring is generally stained wood planks with area rugs utilized in some locations. The first floor hallway and office have carpet. The first floor bath has cork flooring as does the kitchen which was remodeled circa 1998. The mud room has flagstone flooring.

c. Second Floor:

- 1.) Log Cabin: Bedrooms have stained wood plank floors. The hall has sheet vinyl flooring.
- 2.) Main House Additions: Flooring is generally stained wood planks with area rugs. The primary bedroom and bath have carpeted floors. The secondary bath has a ceramic tile floor.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish:

a. First Floor:

- 1.) Log Cabin: Exposed wood log walls and exposed wood beams with wood plank ceiling in the main room. Bath has painted gypsum board walls with ceramic tile in the shower enclosure. Bath ceiling is painted gypsum board.
- 2.) Main House Additions: Painted gypsum board walls and ceilings in most areas. Den has stained wood paneling extending to seven feet above the floor, with painted gypsum board to ceiling. The mud room has knotty pine wood paneling and ceiling beams encased in knotty pine paneling.

b. Second Floor:

- 1.) Log Cabin: Bedrooms have painted gypsum board walls and ceilings.
- 2.) Main House Additions: Common areas have painted gypsum board walls and ceiling. The primary bedroom has wallpaper on the walls that continues on the sloped portions of the ceiling. The flat portion of the ceiling is painted gypsum board. Likewise, the primary bath has wallpaper on the walls that continues on the sloped ceiling with painted gypsum board on the flat ceiling. The secondary

bedrooms have wallpaper on gypsum board walls and ceilings. The secondary bath has wallpaper on its walls and a painted gypsum board ceiling.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and Doors: The doorways on the first floor employ a wood plinth and base with verticals extending to molding across the head of the doorway. Sliding doors are six-raised-panel design. Common swinging doors have five-raised-panel faces. Thresholds are wood. Operable transom windows cap doorways leading into principal rooms, such as the den. The second floor doorways have a simple wood trim and the doors utilize four-raised-panel designs. Operable transom windows top the doorways leading into the bedrooms.
- b. Windows: Window trim on the wooden casement windows typically matches the trim of the principal doorways into the various rooms.

6. Decorative Features: On the first floor, decorative cast iron grills cover wall openings at the floor for heating supply from the basement. Wood Greek key cornice molding adorns the upper walls of the living, dining, and hall spaces. The central staircase has decorative turned wood spindle newel posts at the second floor and at the intermediate landing. The newel post at the first floor has a simple wood base. The enclosed portion of the run at the first floor has wood raised paneling with wood molding at the cap. The painted wood stair balusters support a molded wood handrail.

7. Architectural Furniture: On the first floor, the den has built-in wood bookcases below the window on the north wall. The second floor hall has built-in bookcases with glass doors in the upper sections and paneled wood doors in the lower section.

8. Hardware: Most of the hardware has changed over the years, therefore little historically and/or architecturally significant hardware remains.

9. Mechanical Systems:

- a. Heating: Many changes have occurred over the years in the house's heating arrangements with little certainty regarding the dates of such changes. Originally, the log cabin was heated solely by its fireplace. The large additions to the log cabin were heated by a combination of the several fireplaces and the coal-fired furnace located in the basement. Currently, heating is provided by forced-air central units.
- b. Plumbing: As with the heating, plumbing fixtures have changed over the years. The house has fully equipped bathrooms and a kitchen, modernized circa 1998.
- c. Electric: The house and ranch headquarters acquired electricity by August 1992 via an electric plant located on ranch property and operated by ranch employees.

D. Site:

1. Historic Landscape Design: Changes over the years in the landscape surrounding the Main House have obscured some of the original historic landscape with some notable exceptions: some of the one-hundred trees planted by ranch manager Richard Walsh in 1904 still remain, and the hug boulder seen in early photographs of the construction of the log cabin remains in its original location south of the Main House. Gardens mentioned in World War I era correspondence between Cornelia Adair and ranch manager T. D. Hobart no longer exist.
2. Outbuildings: A wood frame and siding commissary and storage building are approximately twenty feet to the west of the Main House.